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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gather information on the strengths and needs of student teachers as measured by the Assessment of Performance in Teaching (APT) Instrument. Participants in the study were 194 student teachers, 19 university supervisors, 194 supervisory teachers, and 80 principals. During the semester three scheduled observations of student teacher modal demonstrations were carried out by trained observers using APT measures, and their ratings were compared to corresponding self-observations prepared by the observed student teachers using the same measures. The APT Instrument is divided into five performance dimensions: (1) planning activities; (2) fulfilling instructional responsibilities; (3) using professional classroom management techniques; (4) communicating acceptably; and (5) demonstrating a positive attitude toward students and learning. Each performance dimension was measured by eight to eleven observation statements. Ratings by both the trained and student observers in this study indicated that participants were competent in the five basic performance dimensions. In light of recent studies suggesting the need for better discipline, improved planning, and greater knowledge of subject matter, the study supported definite improvement in the basic preparation of student teachers. Written communication was the single most-missed performance dimension reported by observers and student teachers. (JD)

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Assessment of Performance in Teaching of Student Teachers

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Due to a national trend in teacher education with emphasis on product indicators, evaluation of student teachers is becoming more objective. Performance is measured in behavior terms that affect student learning. If the needs of student teachers could be identified and alleviated, then the climate in the beginning years of teaching might be less stressful and more productive.

In recent years, state basic skills exams and national exit exams, plus the use of performance ratings, during student teaching are becoming valid measures in evaluating teaching ability. (7:2) A review of several articles suggested that classroom discipline and lesson planning were the major areas encountered by student teachers which needed the most improvement. (6:9:11) Also, Bennie, (1), Henry (4) and Beasley (5) found knowledge of subject matter was a major strength of first-year teachers.

The purpose of this study was to assess the strengths and needs of student teachers as a step toward improving performance during internship. Gathering information through valid instruments gives teacher education programs an opportunity to improve significantly.

METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS USED

The study was concerned with 19 university supervisors, 194 supervisory teachers, 80 principals and all student teachers (n=194) who completed student teaching at Clemson University during the academic year 1986-87.

During the semester student teachers prepared three different lessons as model demonstrations. Three trained reliability observers (university supervisors, supervisory teachers, principals, or designees) visited the student teachers' classrooms at the scheduled times to observe the prepared lessons. The observation ratings were prepared immediately after each lesson so that specific examples and incidences could be readily recalled and cited as evidence of performance.

Similarily, three self-observations using the same form were prepared by the observed student teachers as soon as possible after the lesson. The purpose of the self-observations was to compare the ratings of the student teachers with those of the observers during the conference discussion. This comparison enables the observers to identify needs of which the student teacher was unaware.

The Assessments of Performance in Teaching (APT) was developed by the South Carolina Educator Task Force and is used to measure the strengths and needs of student teachers. (10) The APT Instrument was derived from more than 50 state and national teacher evaluation forms. Through a survey of 20,000 South Carolina educators, through concurrent and contact studies, and through data analyses of pilot and field study tests for objectivity, reliability, and validity, the APT Instrument was prepared for statewide implementation. The mandated instrument is used to determine whether teachers can apply fundamental teaching skills in the classroom. The APT measures only those minimum teaching skills that can be observed during classroom instruction by a trained observer and it is generic to all classroom performance, regardless of subject area or grade level.

The APT Instrument (Table 1) is divided into five Performance Dimensions: (1) Planning activities to meet objectives and student needs, (2) Fulfulling instructional responsibilities, (3) Using professional classroom management techniques to assist students in learning, (4) Communicating acceptably, and (5) Demonstrating a positive attitude toward students and learning. Each performance dimension is measured by eight to eleven observation statements. The observation statements are dichotomus (yes/no) decisions that indicate whether or not a teaching skill or behavior was demonstrated during the observation. Specific evidence in the form of a statement citing one or more incidents describing the demonstration is required.

TABLE 1

Performance Dimensions Missed by Student Teachers on The APT: Observation Instrument

	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%
PD 1: PLANNING												
a. outcomes stated	14	(3)	1	(1)	5	(2)	8	(3)	1	(0)	1	(1)
b. objectives compatible	0	(0)	3	(1)	2	(1)	0	(0)	1	(0)	1	(1)
c. procedures stated	6	(1)	5	(2)	2	(1)	1	(0)	3	(2)	1	(1)
d. students involved	0	(0)	2	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)	1	(0)	0	(0)
e. materials stated	11	(3)	7	(2)	4	(1)	6	(2)	3	(2)	6	(3)
f. differences planned	16	(4)	7	(2)	1	(0)	13	(4)	4	(2)	1	(1)
g. objectives assessed	28	(7)	19	(6)	9	(3)	17	(6)	10	(5)	3	(2)
h. progress recorded	10	(2)	10	(3)	8	(3)	12	(4)	8	(4)	2	(1)
	85	(20)	54	(18)	33	(12)	59	(20)	31	(15)	15	(10)
PD 2: INSTRUCTION												
a. began promptly	1	(0)	7	(2)	0	(0)	1	(0)	1	(0)	2	(1)
b. objectives addressed	1	(0)	3	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)	3	(2)	0	(0)
c. needs accommodated	14	(3)	4	(1)	2	(1)	6	(2)	2	(1)	2	(1)
d. interest stimulated	9	(2)	6	(2)	15	(5)	7	(2)	6	(3)	5	(3)
e. approaches varied	1	(0)	0	(0)	4	(1)	2	(1)	0	(0)	2	(1)
f. size varied	17	(4)	7	(2)	14	(5)	7	(2)	1	(0)	2	(1)
g. active opportunities	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(0)	1	(0)	1	(1)
h. application opportunities	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
i. information obtained	4	(1)	7	(2)	4	(1)	2	(1)	4	(2)	3	(2)
j. progress provided	1	(0)	1	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)
k. physical arrangement	3	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)	3	(1)	4	(2)	0	(0)
	51	(11)	37	(11)	43	(15)	32	(10)	22	(10)	17	(10)
PD 3: MANAGEMENT												
a. behavior established	3	(1)	0	(0)	1	(0)	2	(1)	0	(0)	1	(1)
b. firm enforcement	7	(2)	6	(2)	7	(3)	6	(2)	4	(2)	3	(2)
c. procedural confidence	2	(0)	2	(1)	2	(1)	3	(1)	4	(2)	4	(2)
d. instruction continued	11	(3)	12	(4)	4	(1)	6	(2)	7	(4)	3	(2)
e. distuptions addressed	3	(1)	4	(1)	3	(1)	1	(0)	3	(2)	0	(0)
f. codes enforced	4	(1)	9	(3)	6	(2)	3	(1)	2	(1)	4	(2)
g. inattentive involved	23	(6)	11	(4)	9	(3)	7	(2)	3	(2)	2	(1)
h. special assistance	7	(2)	2	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)	1	(0)	1	(1)
i. strategies adjusted	4	(1)	3	(1)	2	(1)	5	(2)	4	(2)	1	(1)
j. patient, poised	1	(0)	2	(1)	1	(0)	4	(1)	2	(1)	1	(1)
k. fair, impartial	2	(0)	4	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)	1	(0)	0	(0)
	67	(17)	55	(19)	39	(14)	41	(14)	31	(16)	20	(13)
PD 4: COMMUNICATION												
a. instructional plan	8	(2)	4	(1)	2	(1)	4	(1)	0	(0)	2	(1)
b. logical sequence	0	(0)	2	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	2	(1)	2	(1)
c. understandable level	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(0)	1	(1)
d. explanations restated	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(1)
e. illustrations demonstrated	2	(0)	2	(1)	3	(1)	4	(1)	2	(1)	2	(1)
f. knowledgeable authority	2	(0)	1	(0)	3	(1)	4	(1)	1	(0)	3	(2)
g. information accurate	4	(1)	8	(3)	4	(1)	4	(1)	2	(1)	4	(2)
h. legible writing	8	(2)	7	(2)	4	(1)	4	(1)	3	(2)	2	(1)
i. written communication	52	(13)	43	(14)	36	(13)	32	(11)	14	(7)	19	(12)
j. oral commuincation	3	(1)	5	(2)	2	(1)	4	(1)	3	(2)	2	(1)
k. speech quality	0	(0)	1	(0)	1	(0)	2	(1)	1	(0)	0	(0)
	79	(19)	75	(24)	55	(19)	58	(20)	29	(14)	38	(23)

	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%
PD 5: ATTITUDE												
a. courtesy modeled	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(1)
b. positive reinforcement	6	(1)	0	(0)	4	(1)	6	(2)	2	(1)	4	(2)
c. expression encourage	7	(2)	13	(4)	4	(1)	8	(3)	4	(2)	5	(3)
d. learning personalized	20	(5)	20	(7)	19	(7)	24	(8)	12	(6)	13	(8)
e. supportive corrections	10	(2)	2	(1)	8	(3)	5	(2)	3	(2)	3	(2)
f. reasons given	15	(4)	9	(3)	13	(5)	8	(3)	8	(4)	6	(3)
g. value communicated	16	(4)	22	(7)	14	(5)	14	(5)	12	(6)	7	(4)
h. enthusiasm communicated	21	(5)	11	(4)	22	(8)	19	(6)	15	(8)	13	(8)
i. open-mindedness	0	(0)	1	(0)	0	(0)	1	(0)	2	(1)	0	(0)
j. humor acknowledged	23	(6)	23	(8)	30	(11)	22	(7)	17	(9)	18	(11)
	118	(29)	102	(34)	114	(41)	107	(36)	75	(39)	70	(42)

DATA ANALYSIS

The data did not lend themselves to traditional statistical measures. After investigation of these data, the authors' felt that it would be more interesting, and meaningful to the reader to tabulate the number and percentage of performance dimensions missed. (Table 1) Percentages were rounded to whole numbers for clarity of presentation.

PLANNING

This performance dimension refers to the teacher's ability to plan for learning experiences which provide students the opportunity to acquire the intended knowledge or skills. This group of student teachers had strengths in this competency. When self-observation columns were combined, the student teachers concurred with the university supervisors' findings that a need to improve in assessment procedures existed. Freeland (3) cited this conclusion in his study.

INSTRUCTION

Performance dimension two refers to a competent teacher presenting information and concepts to students efficiently. Instruction was reported as a strength more than any other major dimension in the study. University supervisors, supervisory teachers and principals indicated that student teachers had strengths in beginning the lesson on time, addressing objectives, demonstrating a variety of methods, providing an opportunity for active student involvement and informing students of their progress during the lesson. University supervisors called attention to varying organizational sizes of the classroom.

MANAGEMENT

Handling disciplinary problems has already been reported in recent articles as a source of greatest student teacher concern and trouble. Surprise! This group of student teachers used professional classroom management techniques to assist students in learning. They appeared to be strong in providing expectations for behavior conducive to learning. Patience and poise were maintained and students were treated with fairness and impartiality.

COMMUNICATION

This dimension refers to student teachers serving as a model and providing evidence that written and spoken communication is acceptable. Both observers and student teachers identified strengths in appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. Clear explanations, and speech and voice quality which did not interfer with communication were found to be strong qualities. Errors in spelling, grammar and mechanics were listed as the skill most needing improvement.

ATTITUDE

This dimension refers to teacher-student interactions that promote a positive psychological environment conducive to learning. Rutler (8) suggested that effective schools had large numbers of teachers who had positive attitudes toward learning. Observers and student teachers identified attitude toward students and learning as the general component most needing improvement. Major concerns were the failures to utilize humor, to personalize references for illustration, to communicate the value of the lesson, and to demonstrate excitement in learning.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to gather information on the strengths and needs of student teachers as measured by the Assessment of Performance in Teaching. Participants in the study were 194 student teachers, 19 university supervisors, 194 supervisory teachers and 80 principals.

The study focused on minimal competency of student teachers. The APT Instrument was not intended to describe the complete art and science of teaching. The purpose of the evaluation instrument was to determine whether student teachers could apply fundamental teaching skills in the classroom when called upon. The observations made through the use of APT have been judged to be a part of a larger scope of instructional practices that will lead to a significant improvement in teacher education programs.

If the APT Instrument is at all discriminating, then ratings by observers and self observations show that participants were competent in the five basic performance dimensions. In light of recent studies suggesting the need for better discipline, improved planning and greater knowledge of subject matter, this study supported definite improvement in the basic preparation of student teachers. Written communications was the single most-missed performance dimension reported by observers and student teachers.

Instruction (PDII) was the major strength reported. There was general agreement among the observers that student teachers provided for active involvement of students, monitored and gave feed-back to students and gave students an opportunity to apply knowledge stated in the objectives. This finding contradicts some trends reported in the teaching domain.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study supports the concept that the use of valid assessment measures during student teaching does help the supervisors to diagnose specific strengths and needs of student teachers. During student teaching conferences, valid ratings are a part of the supervisor's arsenal to help with a diagnosis and prescription.

An addition to this study supports continuing research using product measures of a control group and a treatment group of student teachers. The control group would be exposed to limited performance-assessments, measured in behavioral terms, while the treatment group would be involved with in-depth performance experiences throughtout the entire undergraduate program.

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